

Kansas Boiler Room



The New Monasticism

The image of the monk or nun is still powerful in our collective imagination. In continuing faithfulness to this integral part of the church's witness to Christ, people still respond to the call to leave all and follow him. But in our day this response is often taking new and exciting forms that complement the traditional patterns of religious life. This issue of *franciscan* hears from groups of people committing themselves to follow a simple rule of life, keep a pattern of daily prayer, have a concern for the poor and marginalised, and share a form of extended community. Their experience is surely a sign of the vitality of the church, and of the continuing relevance of the religious life today.



Boiler Rooms and New Monastics

Andy Freeman

It's 4.15 am and I'm sitting in a room, about 20ft by 20ft. I can see bright stars in the night-sky through the skylight and I know it's a cold night, having just walked in about fifteen minutes before. I had regretted not putting on a coat.

I begin to scan round the room. Artwork is quite literally dripping from the walls and ceilings. Pictures of God, pictures to God, passionate prayers, Bible verses, questions and doubts can all be found on these scraps of paper that have formed intercessions of the marker pen or paintbrush.

'Be still and know that I am God' is written in crayon above my head. To my left, someone's written a letter to God, crying for help.

I fix my eyes on the candles in the corner of the room, and the small icon of Jesus. The Sigur Ros track on the stereo drifts over me. I focus on Jesus and begin to pray, inviting him to be with me, in a little room, in the night.

Welcome to one of the many 24-7 prayer rooms which are taking place

all over the world. Even as you slept last night, people were in similar rooms praying - in the UK, in Europe, in North America, in Asia and in Africa - people praying.

And this has been going on for eleven years now. In September of 1999, the first 24-7 prayer room in Chichester (on the south coast of England) sparked into life - people prayed there continuously for 3 months, and kick started a movement which has now affected people in 60 countries. And for many people, their story is much the same as mine - that God has changed the course of their lives through these funny, intimate and deeply holy little prayer rooms.

It was January 2000 and I was a Youthworker at Greyfriars Church in Reading. Greyfriars was a growing,

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but also reasonably typical Church of England church, on the evangelical side of things. Although things looked OK, we were frustrated, feeling our youth programme wasn't having that much impact. So the team had all taken time off work to attend a youth leaders' conference and we were expectant that God would show us some new kind of strategy or idea. Then we read the flyer.

It read '24-7 Prayer' and had the headline 'Epidemic warning' across the bottom. It called on people to set up continuous prayer-rooms and spread a virus of prayer.

We realised that although we had worked hard and tried lots of great ideas, we hadn't spent too much time praying.

'Prayer?' Was that it, God? Was that what you wanted to say to us? I have to admit I was a little disappointed to think that this was God's blinding flash of light to us. "Here is my great strategy: you should pray more." But as we chatted, we realised that although we had worked hard and tried lots of great ideas, we hadn't spent too much time praying. We certainly hadn't spent time praying simply because we wanted to hang out with Jesus. "Prayer it is, then."

Within a month we had organised a weekend of 24-7 prayer. A room was set aside and decorated. We sorted out a rota, dividing the day into hours and getting people to sign up for different slots. Then, on a Friday night at the end of February 2000, we opened.

My first slot was 3 a.m. on the Saturday. I remember going to sleep that night feeling slightly worried that I might not wake up and slightly upset that I'd have to get up in the middle of the night. But at 2.45 a.m. my alarm went off, I jumped in the car and set off. Arriving at the door to the Church Centre, I was a bit concerned. It looked dark and no one was answering the bell. I took out my key, opened up and wandered down to the prayer room. I could feel my heart sinking at the thought of finding the room empty or finding someone asleep. Then Nathaniel put his head round the door, smiled and called to me to come in. "You won't believe what's been going on..."

Little did I know that that night was going to change the direction of my life completely.

I remember Nathaniel's grin as he explained what had been going on that first night. Our young people had been really going for it in prayer. The walls were already covered with their heart cries, Bible verses and pictures. Everyone had remarked how easy it had been to pray.

As I prayed with Nathaniel, and with Dan

who was also still there (even though his slot was due to have finished two hours previously), I began to dwell on what was going on here. I can safely say that I had never experienced God's presence so heavily. I had seen some pretty amazing stuff on my 12-year road as a Christian. I had experienced God meeting with me personally. I had been in meetings where God had done amazing things. But here was a space in which God's presence seemed to be residing. I didn't think my theology was meant to believe in special places or buildings. What was going on?

Our first weekend of 24-7 prayer will live long in my memory. It was followed by many other prayer rooms, resulting in salvation, in healings and in many answered prayers, as well as many unanswered ones too. But those nights of prayer started something in our hearts too. People started saying "why can't we have a prayer room all the time?" As people met with Jesus, there was a longing for something longer term. The Boiler Room in Reading opened in 2001 and my life changed forever.

A Boiler Room is 24-7's attempt at a modern day monastery.

A Boiler Room is 24-7's attempt at a modern day monastery. Hopefully, many of you reading might find some familiar aspects of this. We operate a simple rule of life, have daily rhythms of prayer, we're committed to live out our prayers in the lives of the poor and needy. We practise community.

But the Boiler Room project in Reading has taken on many shapes. First we gathered in a disused pub, welcoming pilgrims, caring for the excluded teenagers in our city, and praying - praying a lot. We then spent time without a home, as a mobile movement - then found a new venue - and lost it again. Now we operate as a mobile community, fixed to a rule and way of life - and committed to Jesus and each other. We are now called 'Reconcile' and are part of a wider Boiler Room family - thirty 24-7 monasteries around the world, often in the most unlikely of settings - East German villages, drugs and prostitution tolerance zones in Mexico, amongst clubbers in Ibiza, with the Salvation Army in Liverpool.

And people often ask, What is this? What's going on? For me the answer is simple. It's about Jesus, about centering on him through prayer.

We have been deeply influenced by Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his dreams of new monastic communities. But much of what Bonhoeffer wrote expressed a simpler and more basic desire. "Jesus is the only significance. Besides Jesus nothing has any significance. He alone matters."

In the prayer room we began to find

Jesus. We shaped rhythms of prayer that helped us to spend time with him. We lived our prayers out practically because we saw that Jesus did that too. We valued relationship, just as Jesus did and does, and so communities developed.

I'm tired of strategies, of keys to growth or models of building church. I'm tired because they usually don't work. I'm tired because they put me and others in boxes. I'm tired most of all because they're centered on us and not on Christ.

When we began our first prayer room I

People often ask what this is? What's going on? For me the answer is simple. It's about Jesus, about centering on him through prayer.

didn't know much about devotion or about prayer. If I'm honest I was overworked and my spiritual life had little or no depth. There was much in terms of good intention and of passion - but it outworked itself in my strength and ultimately in my activity.

As each day goes by I become more passionate about my dream to see God move in our world and bring about change. But as time goes on I also become more and more convinced that this will happen through a movement of prayer.

'May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' (Galatians 6:14) f

For more information visit www.247prayer.com



Andy Freeman is married to Karen. They have five kids and live in Reading, England. Andy was part of the team that pioneered 24-7's first Boiler Room community. He is now an ordinand with the Church of England and is working with others to plant the Reconcile Community, a 24-7 Community which is an Anglican Fresh Expression. He is involved with Just 24-7 and also writes for Christian Socialist Movement (www.thecsm.org.uk) You can continue to dialogue with Andy on his blog.



The Times They are a-Changin'

Roy Searle

Unlike King Canute who denied reality and suffered the consequences, we need to face up to the state of the Church in Western culture. Revival may be longed for but the reality is one of decline. Post Christendom causes us to learn to sing the Lord's song in a strange land and ask how we live out the gospel in an emerging exile.

As Thomas Kuhn noted, crises are a necessary pre-condition for the emergence of novel theories; and with the emergence of new monastic communities there are some signs of hope, by God's grace, in a movement that is evidencing a call to repentance, renewal and the re-imagining of life, faith, church and community.

Many monastic communities have emerged during periods of significant social change when either the church or society experienced crisis, conflict, struggle or decline. For some they carried a sense of unease with what was and a desire to explore what could be. Many began life, and brought their influence, from the margins of the church and society. Common to both established and emerging monastic movements has been a summons to return to the values expressed in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.



Hetton Hall, Nether Springs

One of the key foundational texts for the Northumbria Community came from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

"The renewal of the church will come from a new type of monasticism which only has in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount. It is high time men and women banded together to do this."

A Community of approximately 2,500 believers from Protestant, Catholic and unchurched backgrounds, we covenant together within the love of Christ and embrace a Rule of Life ~ Availability and Vulnerability.

As established forms of church are waning, renewed fresh expressions are being explored by communities like ourselves. Drawing inspiration and wisdom from the past in exploring a new monasticism, we are not advocating necessarily 'joining' a religious order or the renewal of 'old' religious orders but essentially a commitment to the heart of monastic spirituality and its application to contemporary society.

The new monastic communities are essentially dispersed groups and many have dispensed with the traditional vows of poverty and chastity. The Abbot of Ampleforth Abbey defined a monk as, "A rebel on two fronts": someone who challenges society about its accepted norms and at the same time challenges themselves about their relationship with God and their neighbour.

New monasticism is essentially non-conformist with some prophetic insight that critiques and offers some constructive criticism of aspects of contemporary culture.

New monastic communities challenge the Church to re-examine its priorities.

New monastic communities challenge the Church to re-examine its priorities. For example: where there is little sense of community; where 'running the church' and maintaining buildings has become more important than relationships and service; where narrow and judgemental attitudes preclude welcome and hospitality; where prescribed programmes, anaemic worship, dead institutionalism and a disconnection from ordinary life leads to a lack of connection with humanity; where money, sex and power dominate and damage and where superficiality, reputation and image displaces depth, risk-taking, authenticity and integrity.

The Northumbria Community has grown as people of all ages and backgrounds have responded to God's call to intentional monastic and missional living. The call to seek God, to find a way for living that transforms the human heart and serves the kingdom of God; to counter the individualism of consumer culture with a commitment to covenant and community; that values rootedness, ordinariness and hiddenness; which embraces hospitality, servanthood and a rhythm of life that subverts the frenzied activity, celebrity culture and drivenness that damages relationships with God, self and others, is a call that we are seeking to embrace in following Christ.

In offering a description of who we are and what we are about in the Northumbria Community, we could borrow the words of the writer William Stringfellow as he observed the emergence of a new spiritual movement in America:

"Dynamic and erratic, spontaneous and radical, audacious and immature, committed if not altogether coherent, ecumenically open and often experimental, visible here and there, now and then, but unsettled institutionally. Almost monastic in nature but most of all enacting a fearful hope for human life in society."

From the pioneering and prophetic early days back in the 1980's, when there was never any intention to become a community, we have nevertheless grown from our beginnings in Northumberland to a network of Companions and Friends across the world. We witnessed a spontaneous emergence of community without any advertising, marketing or recruiting as the Lord has brought people to journey and join with us.

Questions not answers informed the Community then, as now: Who is it that we seek? How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? How then shall we live? Values rather than vision guarded and guided our ways.

The Community has a Mother House, Nether Springs, which is relocating this year to its new home, still in Northumberland. Other Community Houses are being established across Britain, France, Holland and North America expressing the heart, home and hospitality of monastic establishments. A Novitiate Process leads many to become Companions, who with Friends covenant together, renewing their 'vows' - their "Yes" to Availability and Vulnerability - each Easter. Our Daily Office, *Celtic Daily Prayer*, provides a pattern for the day and has been a source of inspiration to thousands beyond the Community. Together with our Rule, the Office and accompanying spiritual disciplines, all of which have been formed on the anvil of experience, have informed our core values, ethos and calling.

The phrase "alone and together" reflects intentional aspects of our vocation. The place of the cell, alone before God, listening in solitude, being exposed to our hearts before God are key disciplines that are embraced and which inform and contribute to our life together in

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Roy Searle

A New Obedience

*Why the 210-year-old Church Mission Society
has turned itself into a community*

John Martin



"It seems that what is required of us is not new ideas, but a new obedience to those God has given us already." John V Taylor, General Secretary Church Mission Society, 1963-73

Last year the Church Mission Society, founded in 1799, was formally acknowledged by the Church of England's Advisory Council on the Relations of Bishops and Religious Communities. CMS is now a mission community alongside some very famous and venerable orders.

In one sense there is nothing terribly new about this. CMS has always had a significant community feel about it. It's a membership Society. Some members even refer to CMS as their "family". Implicit has always been a commitment to pray, live with the spirit of generosity and support mission work financially. Part, of course, of the adjustment in this move to community represents members seeing themselves as engaging in mission, not just supporting mission.

CMS was in fact founded by people who were part of an urban community. Members of the Clapham Sect, sometimes known as The Saints, lived in close proximity around Clapham Common. It was from here the campaign against the international slave trade was founded and fuelled. Their inspirer was William Wilberforce MP and they shared with him a wide-ranging political, social and spiritual agenda.

At home The Saints wanted a wholesale reformation of "manners" - a nation at ease with itself, with an end to corruption, abuses and vice. They established Sunday schools to extend literacy among the poor and Bible Societies to foster biblical literacy. Abroad they wanted people everywhere to have the benefits of the Gospel of Christ, hence their commitment to form CMS. So CMS has its roots in community living and action.

On the other hand, CMS becoming an acknowledged community represents something that is new and timely. It runs deeper than mere activism. It grows from a recognition that the world in which we live has changed, that many of the familiar mission models no longer work. As Professor Andrew Walls and many others have made clear, institutional Christianity in the UK and Europe is in recession. The heartlands of a missionary movement that spread the Christian faith to every point of the compass during the past 300 years are now, in the words of Philip Jenkins, a "spiritual malarial swamp".

The CMS move to community is an endeavour to raise the bar about how to be followers of Christ and how to be church today in the mission context in

which we now find ourselves. Samuel Escobar, an influential contemporary voice in world mission has written, "Before searching for methods and tools of communication of a verbal message we must search for a new style of missionary presence relevant to this moment in history."

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We know from Christian history, from the earliest decades of the life of the church onwards, that missionary presence has often been expressed in community. Communities come into their own particularly in places where Christians are a minority or have to live in a hostile environment.

The first Christians in Jerusalem experimented with the common life. We can speak of the desert fathers and mothers. There is the mostly-forgotten story of the Persian church, a missionary enterprise far more substantial than most people realize, whose advance, which even reached China and Afghanistan, was fueled by monastic communities. Then, of course, there is the story of the advance of Christianity into northern Europe with religious communities in the forefront.

In our day there seems to be a movement of the Spirit whereby many diverse groups are recapturing a vision for community as a route into mission. While many long-established religious communities seem to be waning - even closing down - at the same time we are witnessing the emergence of community in new forms. There are many examples: Northumbria, Church Army, Lee Abbey and the Eden Project to name a few.

Some, but not all, are institutionally-based. One of the best attended fringe seminars at the recent Greenbelt Arts Festival was a presentation on small mission communities. Almost spontaneously, in different parts of the British Isles, lay-led small groups are pursuing community living. Some are deliberately locating in "hard" contexts, prompted in no small part by a need for a deeper sense of belonging. They want to contribute to urban regeneration, and the care of underprivileged children, long-term unemployed people, asylum seekers, and the sick. They want to experiment with living simply and getting involved in the care of the living environment.

With CMS there are no plans to require people to be part of a residential community, wear habits and the like. As happened with The Saints at the end of the eighteenth century, CMS will be a "spread-out" community. The best metaphors to sum up the vision are the biblical metaphors of salt and light: Christ-like people in action to influence the world around them.

The CMS community represents continuity but there are aspects that are new. CMS members have traditionally signed a simple declaration in which they undertake to pray, support the mission work of the Society and "commend the Gospel by what I do and what I am." Now members will make seven promises which significantly beef up the commitments CMS members have always made. They raise the bar by inviting members to regularly review their spiritual life and be deliberately missional in every aspect of life.

CMS has among its members many who aspire to be like that. For many years it has operated The Salt Fellowship, a network of self-supporting professionals working in international postings, who seriously engage with the local culture, become part of the local church and find ways to share their faith in challenging, cross-cultural contexts.

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CMS deeply appreciates that mission involvement is not just for the professional or the Religious. Go to churches in Britain's inner cities where the Muslim community out-numbers church adherents and you may well find CMS people. They may have worked for some years in the Middle East or Pakistan. They speak Urdu and connect harmoniously with their Muslim neighbours and find creative ways to share their faith. Or go to rural districts

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where the global crisis in farming has taken a huge human toll. You will find that people affected can look for support from the Farm Crisis Network, where a high proportion of coordinators formerly worked as agricultural missionaries outside Britain.

It is the people of God, all sorts and conditions of them, responding to Jesus' call to be like him, to be drawn into his way of life: the way of love. But it was always such. *f*



John Martin is Senior Adviser, Mission & Public Affairs for the Church Mission Society.

For more information about CMS see the website www.cms-uk.org/

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5 June

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Led by Andy Lester

& Revd Simon Brignall

3-5 September

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18 September

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To book, for further information and for other weekend and day events, please visit

www.hilfieldproject.co.uk

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For Francis, even the birds were included in the mission field, that they may better praise their Creator and Lord
 Sculpture: "St Francis and the Birds" by Frederick Franck at the Convent of the Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement, Assisi

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community. Being made in the image of God, we find our identity in relationship to others. Moving from the idealism about community to the reality of living with one another and all the diversity that comes with broken lives, requires the transforming work of the cell!

The emphasis upon the monastic and the missional provides a healthy balance between enclosure and wandering, being and doing. The raggedness of our life, where we are committed at the core but loose at the edges, is seen in the hospitality of our Mother House and other Houses and the connections made in our missional living which meet with untidy situations and with people who are unable to relate to narrowly defined church programmes and boundaries.

We recognising the challenges and opportunities for living out the gospel in a culture that is distancing itself from the church but are also encouraged by the growing interest in spirituality. Walter Brueggemann suggests that God uses times of exile not only to call us back to himself but to find a new way to be human in the world.

Perhaps new monastic communities, clothed with humility and the courage to embrace the radical call of the gospel, might contribute something not only to the renewal of the church but to realising hope for society. *f*

Roy Searle is one of the Founders of the Northumbria Community.

Married to Shirley they live in the Cheviot Hills of Northumberland. A former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Roy travels throughout Europe overseeing the Community's life and work as one of its Overseers.

For the more energetic

Hilfield Youth Camp

(13 - 17 year olds)

15 - 22 August 2010

Contacts:

Ali Waller: 07725617195

email: andy.allyhyc@hotmail.co.uk

Bookings - Andy Currin:

andy_currin@talk21.com

View the video on the website!

Pilgrims of St Francis

2010 National Pilgrimage

Shifnal to Worcester

August 21 - 28

2010 International Pilgrimage

near Enschede in the Netherlands

24 July - 2 August

Contact: Caroline Hannah
 11 Littlebrook Road, Ashford, Kent.
 TN23 3HP
caroline.hannah@talktalk.net



The Advisory Council - Recognition of the religious life in the Church of England

Damian SSF

Spiritual growth doesn't happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programmes but through the age-old spiritual practice of prayer, Bible reading and relationships. So declares Ray Simpson in his interesting new book, *High Street Monasteries*, which explores fresh expressions of committed Christianity.

I have been privileged to be a member of a Committee of General Synod for Canterbury and York, known as the Advisory Council of Bishops and Religious Communities, over its last three terms: we are five bishops and nine elected members of the religious communities based in the two Provinces. We meet twice a year with the defined joint functions of providing advice to bishops about matters that concern us both, and to give guidance to incipient communities.

In fact the Council, which constantly reminds itself that it is advisory, has in my time revised and expanded the *Handbook of the Religious Life* (Fifth Edition, 2004 and published by SCM-Canterbury Press). It has created a Trust Fund to support new ventures in the Religious Life out of donations or other funds from communities that are winding up. It has also given a lead for those who feel called to make vows within a context of the Single Consecrated Life. Indeed, there is now an official register with a monitoring service to encourage those so called.

As many have begun to notice and as was featured in the *Church Times* a year or so back, the religious life in most Western based religious orders is in serious decline. Communities are down-sizing, amalgamating or simply disappearing. Certainly, the average age is generally providing a selection of winter fuel allowances and pension prospects. Our Advisory Council has responded to this, hoping that it might in practical ways help to assist the promptings of the Holy Spirit where new expressions of monasticism are emerging or are in their formative years.

But how are these new expressions to be measured? What are the criteria that allow the church to recognise them as the successors of the religious orders of the last century? Are they to be seen as groups living together, and under a vow of celibacy - for life?

Some would suggest, rather, that the measure should be more targeted as to where a person or group is being drawn to be more of a disciple of Christ, and so is enabled to love God more and love people more. Is it more about the deepening of a commitment to Christ within his church and not through a rule-centred response? Our Third Order sisters or brothers often enquire whether

they are members of a religious community.

Not wishing to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit the Advisory Council has recently widened the categories of Religious Life (previously simply as 'recognised') which now includes Acknowledged Religious Communities. - allowing groups to form, experiment, test and grow into what may become 'recognised' as the religious life of our time. In so encouraging these incipient groups it may be that what is authentic, fully dedicated and 'of God' will be fairly discerned and our present emphasis on life vows, or commitment or living in community (the criteria we have tended to use to authenticate this life) is properly replaced or may stand alongside in our post-modern culture.

*What are the criteria
that allow the church to
recognise new groups as the
successors of the religious orders
of the last century?*

I have lived on Holy Island for seven exceptionally happy years. St Aidan and the Irish monks who gave Northumbria its Golden Age have provided many with an inspiration to renew their Christian commitment - albeit as interpreted by a popular Celtic spirituality and written about by many of our contemporary Christian authors. Popular indeed, though not entirely in line with the original way of life assumed by Aidan's austere religious dedication as witnessed to the people of Northumbria. To tell the truth, any twenty-first century Christian way could never fully recapture the single-minded responses of those pioneer monks of the seventh and eighth centuries. But neither could one expect to emulate such a punishing routine today or live by their rule, as Franciscans today also beg for some relaxing of St Francis' rule of poverty. Rather, the call now is definitely for greater flexibility and mutual accountability and some tolerance towards our well practised independence. Yet we cannot have it all our own way or it would be a worthless pursuit. The Christian call to prayer, to belong, to serve, to prophesy, to protest, to die to self, to live in Christ, when it is translated

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CSF to Move from Somerset

The Community of St. Francis will end its ministry of hospitality in Compton Durville at Pentecost, prior to closing the house. This decision has been made reluctantly, as part of a wider process of reviewing the whole province, and seeking to discern the ministries to which we are being called now. Running a house of residential hospitality has become increasingly demanding over the last few years, with fewer sisters physically able to deal with the work involved. In addition the increasing demands of official regulation (fire risk, health and hygiene and so on) have become more and more onerous both financially and in terms of workload.

The buildings at Compton Durville do not belong to CSF but to the Number 1 Trust. It is the Trust who will decide what happens to the buildings once CSF has left.

We have explored options with a number of dioceses, and visited several properties. The redundant vicarage in Metherringham seemed to fit our requirements almost perfectly, and we are purchasing it. It is in Lincoln diocese which has no other religious communities, and is a part of the country where CSF has never lived, so along with our sadness at leaving Compton Durville and the Diocese of Bath and Wells is excitement at the prospect of bringing the Franciscan religious life to a new part of the country.

CSF's existing houses in Birmingham, Leicester and London will continue their present ministries. The sisters presently at Compton Durville will be dispersed around the province and a new group will begin life in the new house.

The Community knows that many of our friends, those who have worshipped with us, visited us, and stayed with us, will be very sorry to hear this news. We will miss this place, which has been a community house for nearly 50 years, but we believe that this decision is necessary in order to maintain the life of CSF as a Franciscan religious community into the future. We hope that our friends here will want to go on supporting us in our other houses and ministries.

The Sisters are grateful for the kindness and encouragement we have received since our news became public. Through the summer we shall be busy sorting and dispersing the contents of the house at Compton, and moving to our various new homes. We are part way through a long and challenging process of change involving uncertainty, loss, upheaval and exciting new beginnings.

Please keep praying!

A number of farewell events have been arranged and are listed on page 10.

Minister's Letter

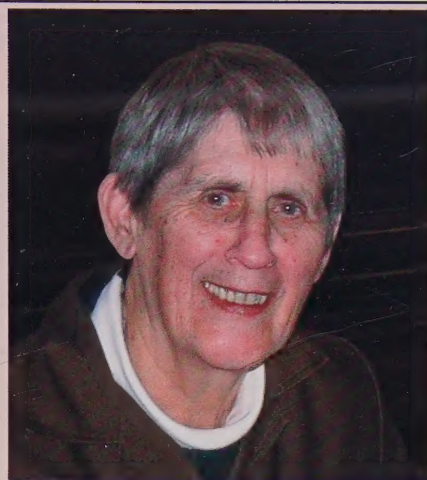
**Sister Joyce CSF,
Minister General of the First Order Sisters,
writes:**

Dear Friends,

Someone once wrote, "Growth means change and change involves risk, stepping from the known to the unknown". We sisters are on the threshold of an historic change. In 1962, when we moved from Dalston, London to Compton Durville, Somerset, because of the post-war rebuilding of East London, little did we realise that another major re-location might be faced by CSF 48 years later. There was not even a prophet amongst us who could have foretold this! In fact going back further in our history to 1909, the move from Hull to Dalston was rather a significant move for the sisters of that time. So now in 2010 we embark on the third major re-location from Compton Durville, Somerset to Metheringham, Lincolnshire.

However there is a significant difference in this re-location. CSF no longer is largely centred in one house. Metheringham, like the present Compton Durville, will be one of seven houses where sisters live and work: five in the United Kingdom, one in South Korea and one in the Province of the Americas. Growth there has been since that move in the sixties, not simply in numbers of sisters, but also growth in the different ministries undertaken by the community members: from a community ministry of nursing the elderly to a variety of individual ministries which has always

included offering hospitality in our houses; from an independent Community to an autonomous part of the First Order of the Society of Saint Francis, working interdependently with our brothers and with parallel structures. Within all this growth there has been considerable change and risk, by stepping out in faith from the known to the unknown. This has not always been a straightforward process for it has brought pain as well as joy, curse as well as blessing, darkness as well as light, for this is the very stuff of being human. A significant amount of this growth and change has occurred within my forty years (almost) in CSF. However this stepping out in faith also involves a dependence on God, which is the very essence of being Christian as well as Franciscan; for Francis, following in the footsteps and teaching of Jesus Christ was central to his understanding of his call from God as written in the Rule for his first brothers, which was essentially some of the 'crucial sayings' of Jesus from the gospels. Perhaps the present situation of CSF might be described in terms of Paul's metaphor of the garden in his First Letter to the Corinthians (with apologies): Rosina Mary and Helen Elizabeth planted, Agnes Mary and Elizabeth watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the ones who plant nor the ones who water are anything, but only God who gives the growth. So we face this risky future together, as a



community, trusting in God's providence and grace.

Recently I saw an exhibition of the sculptures of Lorenzo Quinn in London. One of his works was titled 'What Came First?' I was very struck by the words that inspired this sculpture of two human beings in each half of an egg. In any relationship there may be unanswered questions. The beauty of partnership is to find out answers together. Truthful relationship lasts forever because the answers are always coming and keeping interest alive. And so my prayer is that we may continue to learn to live with the questions as we step out in faith from the known to the unknown and try to discern the answers together.

Peace and all good!

Joyce CSF

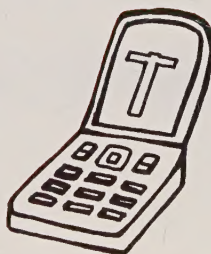
Continued from page 6

into a sign of a holy place where salvation is to be found, will provide full evidence of the forward monastic movement which, under the call and guidance of God's Holy Spirit, will be known and recognised to be an established part of Christ's own Body, the Church. *f*



Damian SSF lives at Hilfield Friary and is Provincial Bursar for SSF in the European Province.

Theme Prayer



**Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Collect for the Second Sunday of Epiphany

After Copenhagen - four urgent imperatives facing us about climate change:

First, keep praying! Pray to God, live lightly on the earth and be mindful of the Gospel - the Franciscan message.

Second, be part of a community. It is essential to seek solutions in solidarity, working together to combat disunity and political inertia.

Third, love the world. Get outside in the rain and the sun; live with gratitude for the beauty of all that is around you; love is the only power to make lasting changes.

Fourth, get political. Memoranda, resolutions, treaties are the mechanisms that force reluctant (or corrupt or wicked) people to become accountable to the rest of us.

(Based on an article by Clark Berge SSF)

C/SSF at Copen



Pre-Copenhagen: sisters and brothers at The Wave demonstration in London



Prayer together three times each day of the Conference



Archbishop Rowan, preacher at the main ecumenical service, and that banner again



The alternative conference - hundreds of people, stalls and meetings

en December 2009



s Anglican Church, Copenhagen,
the Franciscan team was based



The Franciscan First Order team members: Brothers Clark Berge,
Hugh and Colin Wilfred, Sister Joyce



The melting polar bear outside Copenhagen Cathedral



Interfaith co-operation -
the blowing of the Jewish shofar



Eco-friendly bicycles rule in Copenhagen

Community Routes

◆◆ David Jardine visits Colombia



The contact between Divine Healing Ministries in Belfast and the Church in Colombia began about three years ago. It came through a Dutchman, Pastor Hendrick, who has worked for twenty-two years in Colombia. He has been visiting Northern Ireland for many years and he started coming to our healing services. He invited Divine Healing Ministries to send a team to Colombia, to the city of Cali. We first went in 2008, so the visit in January 2010 was a follow-up.

Cali is reckoned to be the most violent city in the world. There are 15 - 20 people killed every day and between 100 and 200 at the weekend. There are three sources of violence, - drugs, ordinary crime and terrorist organizations. Farc terrorists still hold over 700 people hostage. These people are often captured by ordinary criminals who then sell them to the Farc. Although we were very aware of the dangerous situation we were going into we also knew that if we did what the local people told us we would probably be safe. Indeed they would never allow us to go out alone. Even going to the nearby Palmetto Centre, where we made phone calls, they insisted that we be accompanied. That was great security for us. In addition, I felt on the Feast of the Epiphany, as I read Psalm 138, that the Lord gave us a verse for the trip, 'Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you keep me safe.' We held onto that promise, a very appropriate verse for our mission.

Although we were involved in many different activities in Cali the main part of our mission was preaching in a whole variety of churches, and then praying for people. On a number of occasions we were praying individually for between 100 and 200 people. This would normally be very taxing, but we were surrounded by a whole volume of prayer back home, and this just seemed to carry us through whatever challenge we came up against.

People in Colombia are very open to receive prayer, even in public places. We were out one afternoon giving out leaflets

about the following Sunday's service. Many of the people to whom we spoke accepted the offer of a prayer for healing, right there on the edge of a busy road.

Pastor Hendrick said publicly on more than one occasion that, out of all the groups who come to Colombia, their relationship with the group from Belfast is the best of all. I always knew that the Irish personality travels well, and bringing a faith that has been refined in the most difficult of circumstances we relate well to a people who have had to face much adversity. I think this relationship between the Church in Colombia and the Church in Ireland is only going to grow and develop.

◆◆ SSF in Assisi



Thomas Anthony writes:

What is the place of a lone Anglican in Assisi? Some verses from Psalm 87 come to mind. The psalmist is singing about Jerusalem and its centrality for Jews from all backgrounds:

His foundation is on the holy mountains.

*The Lord loves the gates of Zion
more than all the dwellings of Jacob.*

*Glorious things are spoken of you, Zion,
city of our God.*

As so many of our friars and sisters of various origins are finding their way here it strikes me with more force all the time how Assisi is home to us all.

*I record Egypt and Babylon as
those who know me;
behold Philistia, Tyre and
Ethiopia:*

in Zion were they born.

In a similar sense we can say this about Assisi. The city of Assisi is our city. This is where it all began, and we can visit the places that were important to Francis. We all have our home in Assisi and in that sense we were all born here.

*And of Zion it shall be said,
'Each one was born in her,
and the Most High himself has
established her.'*

*The Lord will record as he writes
up the peoples,
'This one also was born there.'*

*And as they dance they shall sing,
'All my fresh springs are in you.'*

It could sound presumptuous but in that sense all of our brothers and sisters are away from home when they are not in Assisi. Technically I am a friar at Glasshampton, and the brothers there pray for me every evening as 'away from the house tonight', and I need that prayer. And I need to pray for all the others, away from home today. May we find our 'fresh springs' here in the city of Francis and Clare.

In Assisi, May-June and September-October are the busiest seasons, July-August is the time summer residents can be counted on. The place gets pretty quiet by mid-November. Things pick up a little around Christmas, and the Carol service, complete with mince pies and mulled wine, is a highlight. The real still time is from mid-January till mid-March. It's a good time to build on fraternal relations with the 'other' Franciscans.

As Anglicans we have the use of a little medieval church, the oratory of a Confraternity, originally under the patronage of St Leonard, but now known as the Confraternità di San Francesco. We have a small but loyal congregation, who see welcoming visitors as part of their mission. Most travel some distance to Assisi.

On many a Sunday visitors easily outnumber the regulars. We are always happy when visiting groups include worship with us in their itinerary. These groups are not always British - it is not unusual to find groups of Danes or Swedes. If I know beforehand I do my best to have copies of the day's Readings in their language.

Marriage blessings are an additional and special ministry. Couples find a romantic location for their wedding on the web and the venue arranges the civil ceremony (a requirement in Italy), flowers, reception, dinner, and the rest. If the 'rest' includes a 'religious' ceremony, that's where I come



The reredos of St Leonard's Church, Assisi. St Leonard is on the left, holding the manacles, St Francis is on the right; both are accompanied by a group of penitents

in. I get called in six or seven times each year. Building a pastoral relationship with these couples is not easy but we do the best we can by exploring the rationale of the marriage ceremony by email, choosing the readings so that meeting them finally at the event is a real joy. It would be tempting to expand this ministry (there's certainly a 'market' and the financial remuneration is considerable), but that could commercialise the ministry and undo the very purpose of bringing God into couples' lives.

◆◆ Visiting Britain

Eric Michael arrived in September to spend a year in this province. Here he shares his first impressions:

When asked by Br. Jude, in America, where I wanted to go for my year overseas, I told him the European Province because I do urban ministry and there is much going on in London and Leeds that I am interested in observing. So the obvious place for me to start was Hilfield Friary. (For those of you that know this house; you may well be puzzled or laughing because it is very rural, complete with animals and garden). I took it as an opportunity to further my growth in humility. To be honest, I actually enjoyed myself at Hilfield. I was a bit skeptical at first. Why were all these people living alongside the brothers? Why do we need this garden when we have a Tesco? Go shovel chicken what? Since I grew up in Chicago, this was a completely new experience for me. I loved the quiet and beauty of the location. I soon found that I really enjoyed the mixed community of people - men, women, young, old, brothers, volunteers - even a newborn baby, Uriel. Prayer was taken seriously, but with an openness to new experiences. Christmas was especially lovely. I also got to take my hand at cooking meals. I was a bit nervous, since in America I was known for cooking spicy and often, exotic meals; and my knowledge of the British palate was scant, prejudiciously skewed toward the bland and mushy. I gave it a go, anyway, and usually scored a victory - usually. After a few months, I was part of

the team. Groups would visit and we would laugh it up, or discuss topics of concern to the church and world today. I had many a moving experience. (I also continued in my finding the joy in a situation and going with it. I don't generally dwell on the morose). All in all, my time at Hilfield was well-spent and pleasant. I now have moved on to London and am awaiting my time as a volunteer for various charities in the neighbourhood and within London at large. I hope to visit other areas of the Province during my stay, and expect to be amazed at the small gifts of God bestowed upon the brothers and their varied works. Keep an eye out for me; you never know where I may show up!

◆◆ CDC Zimbabwe

John writes:

In October I spent a fortnight sharing the life of the brothers, staff and residents at the Community of the Divine Compassion in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe, which was founded as an African Franciscan brotherhood in the 1980s. The purpose of my visit was to encourage the development of closer links between CDC and SSF.

Zimbabwe had recently experienced some of its toughest times since independence, marked by severe food shortages and a particularly violent period of political intimidation which gave rise to continuing divisions within the Anglican church. Though strained almost to breaking point, the brothers somehow survived, and were instrumental in helping their neighbours to pull through. Now they are devoting themselves to the renewal of their life, both through prayer in a chapel made from their former water cistern, and the pastoral care of some of the most vulnerable people in Nyanga. Income generated from the friary guest house is allocated to the college education of half a dozen orphaned young men who live with the brothers.

Life in Zimbabwe remains precarious and unpredictable. Many are hungry or sick. Yet I could not help but be inspired by the warmth of the welcome I received, and the



Austin shows **Archbishop Rowan** round the Eastbridge Hospital almshouses, Canterbury, in January

generous and tenacious spirit of the people. To be with them is a wonderful blessing, and to realize how much they can teach us about living together in the faith of Christ, and praying with exuberant hope, "Oh that we might see better times." November saw the consecration of CDC's new diocesan bishop, Julius Makoni, before a congregation of 8,000 in Mutare. He covets our prayers as he embarks on an episcopate that fills him with exhilaration and trepidation.



John with the members of CDC: **Peter Chapa**, **Bhekimpilo**, **Admire** and **Brian**

Compton Durville - Farewell events

(See also page 6)

Several Farewell Occasions have been arranged to give specific opportunities to the many people who wish to visit before we close.

Farewell Eucharist

Saturday 22nd May at 5.30pm at Compton Durville

President: The Bishop of Taunton, the Right Rev'd Peter Maurice.

Preacher: Brother Damian SSF.

Open afternoon from 2.30 pm Teas will be served from 3.30 pm
If you plan to come please tell the Guest Sister Tel. 01460 240473
comptondurvillecsf@franciscans.org.uk, by 15th May at the latest.

Farewell Drop-In Days

for those who are unable to attend the Farewell Eucharist.

Friends are invited to attend one only, and to bring a picnic if you plan to be with the sisters over a meal time.

Sunday 2nd May open 10.30 am concluding with Evening Prayer at 4.30 pm

Monday 10th May open 6.30 pm concluding with Night Prayer at 8.45 pm

◆◆ Round up

Damian has moved from Holy Island to Hilfield, **Gerardo** from Glasshampton to Alnmouth and **Peter** from Alnmouth to Hilfield. Maximilian began two terms of study at Westcott House, Cambridge on 5 January. Over the summer and autumn, **Hilary**, **Jannafer** and **Phyllis** will move to Birmingham; **Jenny Tee** to Leicester, **Judith Ann**, **Liz** and **Maureen** to Metheringham; and **Sue** to Southwark. **Jennifer Chan** has returned to Sarawak for a two-year period. After a brief holiday in the UK, **Bart** has returned to Australia to do a course at the Brisbane Conservatorium. f

House Up-date: Walsingham

Paschal SSF writes:

For nearly a thousand years pilgrims and visitors have unburdened themselves of their hopes and fears at Walsingham, and have found peace. Why? Because the Virgin Mary appeared in a vision to the Lady Richeldis, in 1061, and told her to build a replica of her house at Nazareth, where she received the "first of her joys", the angelic salutation from Gabriel when she was invited to become the Mother of God. Soon Walsingham became "England's Nazareth" and it rivalled Jerusalem, Rome and Compostella, as one of the most popular pilgrimage centres in Christendom.

The English Reformation soon did away with Religious life, pilgrimages, and devotion to Our Lady, with its accompanying processions, images and shrines. In 1538 the Holy House, Augustinian monastic church and Franciscan friary were all destroyed. However God put it in the mind of Fr. Hope-Patten to restore pilgrimage and devotion to Our Lady here, when he became vicar in 1921. Against a background of suspicion, prejudice and fear often, sadly, from within the hierarchy of the Church, he resolutely maintained Catholic faith and practice and so now thousands of pilgrims can come once again to this holy place.



Maximilian leading the procession for the Assumptiontide Mass

Paschal and Maximilian have now been here for two years, working as members of the Shrine staff and living in a tiny cottage-friary opposite the Anglican Shrine. It has been an eventful time, with the departure of the Priest-Administrator and his Shrine-Priest and the arrival of an Episcopal Administrator and his new Shrine Priest and Youth Missioner. After 'filling gaps' for some time, the full complement for the Shrine Team is here,



With the Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of the opening of new accommodation at the Anglican Shrine

and the balance between our communal life and the demands of the pilgrimage programme is now being implemented.

Maximilian has been studying for the priesthood via a local course and is at present having two terms at Westcott House, Cambridge, before being ordained to the diaconate at Petertide at Hilfield friary. Local tutorials, course weekends, and practical experience in both parish and shrine, have opened him to a variety of church life, whilst the sacristy duties have kept his feet on the ground! Both he and Paschal have been used in preaching quiet days, retreats and special events, as well as speaking at conferences and working with children and youth in churches and schools. Maximilian will continue with his final studies in his diaconal year. Both the parish and the Shrine look forward to having a liturgical deacon always "on tap" too!!

Paschal, as Assistant Priest at the Shrine, continues to share with Bishop Lindsay Urwin and Fr. Stephen Gallagher in the daily liturgical life of the Shrine with its emphasis on personal renewal, healing and re-commitment to Jesus. It feels like being "on Mission" all the time, as the Shrine staff seek to open people to the theme of the Shrine which is the mystery of the Incarnation. Much of his time is spent seeing pilgrims for spiritual direction or confession. It is hoped that an accessible room will be designated especially for this ministry of the friars. With 210 pilgrims a night, during most of the year, it will be an art to manage this particular pastoral

emphasis here, but we take courage from the Sisters of St Margaret who, in their own Priory, have listened, guided and encouraged pilgrims for over 60 years, and continue to do so. Despite the sadness that we cannot provide a c o m m o d a t i o n ourselves, it is amazing how people find us either in "Our

Lady of the Angels Friary" or in the Shrine. But the brothers have also had engagements with the local Third Order, parishes and schools in the Norwich Diocese and beyond, and there is a constant stream of invitations to preach further afield. However, the on-going pilgrimage programme demands most of our personal energy and resources.

Whilst Henry VIII managed to raze the monastic buildings and places of pilgrimage he could not destroy the water of Walsingham! Daily the healing wells of Walsingham continue to bubble up life-giving water, so fulfilling Our Lady's promise to Richeldis to provide "succour to all who come here". Mary is constantly pointing people to her Son, who is the Living Water himself.

Today Christians come here to discover



Paschal (second in the procession) at the commencement of the Mass for healing and renewal and (below) assisting at the altar.



in Mary the secret of sanctity, that of joyfully and humbly saying "Yes" to God in their own lives. The wounds of a divided Church are still felt in this unique village which has felt the full force of religious intolerance. Yet Walsingham, with its different denominations, and with its silent prayer and public praise, instinctively recognises that it is one "Domain of Mary" with two Shrines. How privileged it is for Anglican Franciscans to do our small part in "rebuilding God's house" which is in need of repair! f

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Celebrating Common Prayer: www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/

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Damian Kirkpatrick SSF et al (Eds)
Joy in All Things
A Franciscan Companion:
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 Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2009,
 260pp, £16.99

This is an updated re-issue of the 2002 edition of *Joy in All Things*. It is the same overall length as the first edition, but some things have gone and some freshly appeared. There is a new chapter on the Rule of St Clare, with an introduction by Frances Teresa OSC and the Rule itself translated by Regis Armstrong OFM Cap. The chapter on The Franciscan Family no longer begins with a history of the English Province of the OFM, but goes back to the thirteenth century and gives a very brief overview of the different strands of the Franciscan family tree. Strangely the history of the Franciscans in Ireland remains intact, but the information about individual communities in Britain has all gone. The bibliography by Philippe Yates OFM has been updated - this may in fact be the most helpful section of the book - and a very short list of websites is now provided. Items remaining the same tell the stories of Francis and Clare, the Rule of St Francis, Living as a Franciscan today, Franciscan liturgical and devotional information, a pilgrim's guide to Assisi and a Franciscan glossary by the late Br. Tristram SSF. Perhaps the most important aspect of the book is that it exists at all, with such close collaboration between Anglican and Roman Catholic Franciscans. It is a testament to the strength and persistence of ecumenical endeavours by many individuals, and would be a useful source of information for any Franciscan, First, Second or Third Order as well as Companions and friends.

Nicholas Alan SSF

Aloysius Rego OCD,
Holiness for All:
Themes from St. Thérèse of Lisieux
 Teresian Press, Boars Hill, Oxford
 2009, 155 pp, £7.00

In September and October, 2009, the relics of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux made a tour of England and Wales. Crowds flocked to the various venues, some three thousand people making their way to the Roman Catholic cathedral of Plymouth for the first day of the visit. Media coverage, both before and during the tour, was surprisingly extensive. So what was it all about? How was it that people of various denominations and none, felt drawn into the influence of this young French nun who died in 1897 in a small Norman convent at the age of 24? Because it is not a matter of bones. No, it is a matter of a saint who encouragingly declared that sanctity was open to all: we do not need to be spiritual athletes; ordinary people can have a close relationship with God,

which is one definition of holiness.

This short book gives us a chance to encounter Thérèse through her writings. It is like having a prolonged conversation with her, interspersed with the wise and perceptive comments of the author. The many extracts from her writings cover the significant relationships and events of her life, her use of the Scriptures, her Little Way of love and dedication, her stress on the merciful love of God.

Those new to Thérèse would probably benefit from reading one of the many biographies. Those who already know her, will be enriched by this welcome addition to the canon.

Susan Elisabeth OSC

Francesc Eiximenis: *An Anthology*
Introduction and selection of texts by
Xavier Renedo and David Guixeras
Translated by Robert D. Hughes
 ISBN 9781 8556 6162 2
 Barcino-Tamesis,
 Barcelona/Woodbridge, 2008, 168pp
 £16.99

Francesc Eiximenis (1330 - 1409) was a Franciscan friar dedicated to the cause of education. This anthology of his writings gives a very interesting insight into the medieval attitude to learning, with sections on education in the home and at school, and on the importance of education to society as a whole. Leaving Barcelona as a young man he was educated at the Universities of Oxford, Toulouse and probably Paris, he returned to Spain as a preacher and author for the lay public using the vernacular language of Catalan. He had obviously read widely, quoting Latin philosophers and early church theologians, and is a great advocate of life in towns and cities, finding there the best opportunities for the flourishing of literate civilization. His advice ranges from parenting skills and marriage guidance, to which books nobles and citizens should read, down to how to blow one's nose in public. He displays the misogyny of the age in rehearsing the perceived shortcomings of women, but is nonetheless a staunch defender of education for women and girls, and indeed for all strata of society. His is a rough world that does not flinch at the prospect of corporal punishment, whether for children or lazy friars unwilling to rise for Matins, even if such a course of action is a last resort. But the desire for learning and the encouragement to self improvement are admirable even now.

Nicholas Alan SSF

Marcus J. Borg & John Dominic Crossan
The First Christmas
What the gospels really teach us about
Jesus's birth
 ISBN 9780 2810 6004 7
 SPCK, 2008, 240 pp, £8.99

Here is a valuable resource for any Christian who is tired of Christmas! We have succeeded, in the opinion of many, in making of the feast something

sentimental, incomprehensible, hackneyed and wearying. This, when it is remembered that the incarnation of God is the distinctively good news of the gospel, and the annual occasion for a public awareness of the church's claims, is not as it should be.

Borg and Crossan restore the biblical nativity narratives to a state of credibility, and give them a significance in their communication of the good news, far beyond that of telling us 'what happened'. The first two chapters of Matthew and Luke are to the stories which follow what the overture is to the opera, what a parable is to the truth it enshrines.

The argument, which takes into account the genealogies of Jesus Christ in Matthew and Luke, is presented in fascinating, and to most scholars convincing, detail. The reader is left with a Christmas which sheds light on the mystery of God's birth as a baby, and thus confirms faith and inspires worship.

Anselm SSF

Kate Tristram
The Story of Holy Island
 ISBN 9781 8531 1945 3

Canterbury Press Norwich, 2009, £12.99
 Amid a selection of new books focused around the Island of Lindisfarne and Celtic spirituality, the question occurs: what exactly is known? Kate Tristram has earned the good reputation on the Island as one who knows the sources and reports with the most accurate history of this important centre of the Irish Church in England. Many will have heard her speak about the characters of Aidan and the four Iona Bishops of Lindisfarne who gave to Northumbria its golden age. Now we have a complete story of this Island, written with all that engaging style and eloquence for which she has become known as a local speaker.

Her illustrated book takes us back from the days when Holy Island was part of the mainland and ends with a comprehensive account of the latest developments in the current generation of residents on the Island. Kate is a tertiary who has given over thirty five years to the Island, establishing Marygate House for pilgrims, and who continues to share the daily pattern of prayer in the Parish Church, the site chosen by Aidan and where Cuthbert and so many others were trained to live holy lives and be fired with missionary zeal.

Read 'the story' from cover to cover: it tells the remarkable history of a unique place in Church history and how it continues to appeal to vast numbers of pilgrims and visitors today. Then return to dip into the chapters, well defined, to sort out your answer for which king, which battle, which saint. Like Kate herself, the book is alive with enthusiasm and respect for, and devotion to, our Celtic Saints. Locally, we had been begging her to write it all down, and here it is, and - as expected - it is a treasure trove!

Damian SSF

The Hilfield Friary Community

Samuel SSF

Over the past year the community of Franciscan brothers at Hilfield has been supplemented by the arrival of others who have come to share in the life and work of the Friary. As well as young volunteers who are with us for up to a year we now have three couples (plus one small baby) and three individuals committed to being with us for a longer period, who are sharing in developing a new pattern of community living.

In one sense this development is a matter of expedience. With seven houses, several outbuildings and nineteen acres of land, the Friary is a large place to manage and care for and for some years it has been difficult to find younger brothers able to undertake this as well as providing hospitality for guests. Work for wayfarers was abandoned a few years ago, the Guest House reduced in size, ministry outside the Friary cut back, and the Hilfield Project established to undertake something creative with the land, but it was still too much for those who remained. We rejected the idea of closing other friaries in order to bring brothers 'back to base', and for a time we even considered the possibility of leaving Hilfield.

In another sense, however, this development is the expression of a new vision of Franciscan community which has been coming into focus over a number of years, and which is mirroring what is happening elsewhere in the Church. People are feeling called to share in a life of prayer and worship, of radical hospitality, of care for creation, and to live this in community - but to do so without the institutional structures that have come to be a part of traditional religious life. This might seem to be a sign of the lack of commitment characteristic of contemporary society or a way of 'having one's cake and eating it', but it could equally well be the work of the Spirit bringing fresh life to a flagging, or even dying, movement.

The development or re-foundation of the community is not without growing pains or risks. The five of us SSF brothers who are now living at Hilfield could feel a bit swamped by the influx of others 'taking over'; the direction of the place could be

hijacked by those who haven't experienced the formation of a Franciscan novitiate and it could lose its particular Franciscan identity. People without a life-long intention or

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commitment can go as well as come and we could be left suddenly in the lurch. Those living with us for a limited time, especially couples with children, are going to have different needs to brothers who are vowed to celibacy and poverty, so there are financial and other implications too. Yet here we are, trusting that this is the way forward under God.

It seems to me that there are three essentials in response to such risks, the first of which is that a life of prayer and worship is maintained as central to the community. We continue with the rhythm of prayer time, daily office and Eucharist which is part of the SSF First Order rule; others join the brothers for more or less of the liturgy and share in officiating, reading, interceding, preaching and preparing worship - indeed we often need to rely on them to keep the pattern going. We make room, too, for other less formal kinds of prayer and bible study. Without this centrality of prayer the community would be in danger of losing its Christ-centredness - the very thing which attracts people to Hilfield in the first place.

The second essential is some clarity in understanding what we are about, for life in community can never be an end in itself. Hilfield, from the beginning of Franciscan life here, has always been a place of care for people and of radical hospitality, especially for those on the margins of society. The guest ministry for both individuals and groups continues, and we are beginning to welcome again people who come with particular needs of

sanctuary, rehabilitation, or renewal. The focus on paying attention to the land and on its 'kindly use' for producing food is, we believe, a true expression of our Franciscan view of creation as a blessing and as a family of which we are a part, rather than just as a location where we happen incidentally to live, a place simply for our own convenience. The title of the Peace and Environment Project, set up in 2006 to put this into practice, has been adjusted slightly to that of The Hilfield 'Programme', in order to emphasise that this is now an expression of the whole Hilfield Friary Community - its mission - rather than something separate and running in parallel to it. Having various types of accommodation available to visitors, self-catering as well as the Guest House and rooms for day groups, means that we can offer a programme of study and reflection which shares with others something of our Franciscan ecology or 'household wisdom'.

Lastly, for this new type of community to succeed, those who come to join us must be invited to play a full part in carrying responsibility for the life, rather than being seen just as 'brothers' helpers'. While ultimate responsibility for Hilfield remains for the foreseeable future with the First Order SSF Provincial Chapter and the Minister, the Hilfield Local Chapter consists of both brothers and longer-term community members and takes decisions about all essential day-to-day matters. The whole community, including those who live locally and come in to help us in any way, also meets together regularly to share concerns and ideas, a kind of formation programme which shapes the vision of who we are and what we are about.

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It could be said that the wheel at Hilfield has come full circle, since in the 1920's under Br Douglas' leadership the early community at Flowers Farm consisted both of those committed to a form of traditional religious life and also of others, including couples, who shared in the work of the market garden and of rehabilitation of men on the road. Out of that initiative (not without its critics who claimed that it wasn't 'proper' religious life) there issued a flowering of which today's Society of St Francis in its three orders is the fruit. Who knows where this present development will lead us? *f*

Hilfield Friary Shop

Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE UK

Tel: (01300) 341882

email: hilfieldshop@franciscans.org.uk

Open: Wed - Sat 2.30 - 4.30

The shop stocks religious books, including many with a Franciscan theme. Cards, postcards, candles, sweatshirts, tee-shirts, gifts and Traidcraft goods are also on sale.

Credit card facilities available

Brother Edward SSF

Damian SSF

St Matthew 19. 16-26 Jesus' telling of the story of the rich young man begs us to examine our yes's and no's. And Edward said a lot of yes's and very few no's. He sold many possessions, he brought many riches to the poor, and he became a disciple, all at once it seems, because his first turning to Christ also included accepting the call to priesthood with an eye on the Franciscan way. The rich man of the Gospels went home sad, but I am more than confident that Edward has returned home full of humble joy, gratitude and goodwill.

Let me take you back to the childhood of Christopher John, born on 5th March, 1921, the younger son of the Rt Hon Hastings and Mrs Eleanor Joyce Lees Smith. He and Patrick were proud of their father, Christopher John especially so. Imagine him standing up in the centre of Keighley at the age of 8 making his very first political speech, Vote for Daddy! So we can unveil one of Edward's fundamental principles that he taught us as novices, "Never stand up unless you have something to say". He set a precedent at Westminster School by inaugurating their first experience of a trade union, taking sixpence off his fellow students for protection against some of the school's more outmoded practices.

When his father died suddenly in 1941, Christopher was just about to become the youngest colonel in the British Army, serving during the war with the South Notts. Hussars. Proving himself a great campaigner, and leader of men, he survived the horrors of war during which, incidentally, he facilitated the avocets' return to Britain as they became re-established in an area of marshes in Suffolk which he had ordered to be flooded. Edward's reward later from the RSPB was to be given an honorary life membership; the site at Minsmere is today much visited, and the RSPB took the image of the avocet as its logo.

Edward graduated in history at Corpus Christi College, Oxford in 1949; R W Livingstone, the Greek historian, recommended him for a Gladstone Studentship. This reference, dated 27 June 1949, included the words, 'he has gifts which will enable him to do valuable work for Christianity in England, and especially in the field of the relations of Christianity with social problems. He will in the future make an important contribution to the church.' He forged links with pioneer Ted Wickham in the Sheffield Industrial Mission. Ordained deacon in 1950, he served under Canon Gordon Hopkins at St Luke's, Pallion in Sunderland. He arrived at Hilfield in June 1954 and for the next seven years was occupied in gardening, retreats and missions; the best mission work might well be done while stringing runner beans in the fields.

Edward could be very naughty. The parable of the talents, he said, did not apply to himself, suggesting that he had precisely no talents! Well SSF had to teach him how to clean a bath, boil an

egg. At Plaistow in East London he was put in the kitchen only for the brothers to discover the Shepherds Pie on the table was the work of five volunteers whom he had rounded up, as he explained the secret ingredient was just a touch of oregano. Yes, he was a great organiser. Beach trips from Alnmouth Friary in the afternoons had people bringing back dustbins full of sea coal for winter fires. Following the annual Camps at Budle Bay he directed a play each night with his

*Brother Edward SSF
died on 25 February 2010,
and his funeral Mass was
held in the Cathedral at
Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
He was aged 88 years
and in the fifty-fourth year
of his profession in vows.*

band of Northern Pilgrims set around the village squares as they journeyed from Lindisfarne through to Durham Cathedral. There was his Way of the Cross, a drama with just one rehearsal, performing the Passion of our Lord as the gong sounded and the cast froze to create the next Station. He was magic because he always went for the direct message of the Gospel, nothing obscure, always involving people, engaging them in his campaigns, boundless energy spent, dispensing all the fruits of the Spirit, for there was always love and joy and goodness and that clarion call to Christ.

But his deepest influence upon the Church, shown very largely through his 55 years as a Franciscan Brother, was in his work with scores and scores of individuals who perhaps arriving at Hilfield in Dorset would innocently accept an invitation for a 20 minute walk around the Friary triangle. Half way round is a gate. Always he paused just there, took in the magnificent view of the undulating countryside, and capturing the moment, spoke directly to the other about vocations to the priesthood, to the convent, to the brothers, it's about the Primacy of God, you need to Belong and you need to Serve. "Little one, he would say (we were all little ones!) unless you know you belong - you will become lonely, and then it will be either wine, or women, or worse".

Edward's work as a friar in the North-East began with the founding of the Friary at Alnmouth in 1961. From 1966 to 1974 he was elected as Guardian, from whence he became known all over the North East for his warmth towards everyone, his particular work salvaging the lives of many a lad in trouble, always as an authentic example of a friar, a father, a friend. To all he would offer an instant welcome; and you probably left the Friary as a Companion, a Tertiary or an aspirant.

Moving in 1974 to Plaistow in London's East End he was initiated into life in the Third Order as he took up a new role as Tertiary Chaplain. His reforms and communication skills brought about a complete revolution in the modestly sized Tertiary family. Third Order membership rose from 200 to 2000 in twenty years.

Edward had a lifelong devotion to the subject of his University degree, history, which he digested with considerable understanding and wisdom. His Church History lectures to successive groups of novices earned him 110% for delivery and a little less for content. However, the point was that he massively inspired and enthused us to read Church History.

Archbishop George Carey called Edward to Lambeth Palace to receive the Cross of St Augustine. In his citation dated 6 October 1999 the Archbishop said "Some joked about Edward as the recruiting officer, but none could doubt his transparent Christian commitment, his absolute grasp of the discipline of daily prayer and the Eucharist; combined with his real and continued sense of serving the poor. This same pattern had also made Edward the role model for countless numbers of ordinands. Parish priests, bishops, deans and clergy of all sorts of different positions owe the discovery of their vocation and its nurturing to Br Edward."

My own summing up would be wider again: 'Love conquers everything'. Edward: for your obedience to the Great Commandments our Saviour Christ taught his disciples, your love for God and your love shown to so, so many friends, energising us with zeal for the Gospel, your commitment to Christ, your overcoming all the obstacles in the power of the Holy Spirit - thank you. f



Edward SSF